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ABSTRACT

A practicum strategy was designed and implemented that focused on reducing the negative impact of adverse environmental conditions in one particular neighborhood in a town in Alberta (Canada) with a population of 8,500. Children in this neighborhood were served by one elementary school (enrollment 383), from which the strategy was implemented. The practicum plan was formed from the premise that a coordinated, community-based initiative should be implemented. Components of the strategy were a community resource and awareness utilization questionnaire, a parent support book for families living in the area, and a series of Parent Wellness evenings, which were facilitated by community service providers with expertise in family support. The "Community Resource Awareness and Utilization Questionnaire" was completed by almost half of the parents who received it. Responses showed that cost was a major factor in the ability of families to make use of community resources, such as parks and entertainment facilities. The Parent Support Booklet was rated highly by the 10 families who piloted this resource, and it will be used on an ongoing basis by parents who have children attending the target elementary school. The Parent Wellness sessions will be facilitated during the next school year, with some modifications being made as a result of feedback from parents during the project. The project and its evaluation have helped heighten awareness of factors contributing to the high-risk nature of the neighborhood and how schools can help offset this environment. Five appendixes contain the implementation plan and some of the questionnaires and surveys used. Contains 33 references. (SLD)

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FAMILY SUPPORT IN LOW-INCOME NEIGHBORHOODS

ED 414 374

REDUCING THE NEGATIVE IMPACT OF ADVERSE ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS ON ELEMENTARY-AGED CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES

by
Cindy Wilson
Cohort 8F

A Practicum Report Presented to the
Master's Programs in Life Span Care and
Administration in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Science

NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

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Authorship Statement

I hereby testify that this paper and the work it reports are entirely my own. Where it has been necessary to draw from the work of others, published or unpublished, I have acknowledged such work in accordance with accepted scholarly and editorial practice. I give testimony freely, out of respect for the scholarship of other workers in the field and in the hope that my own work, presented here, will earn similar respect.

June 26/97 — Date

Cindy Wilson — Signature of Student

ABSTRACT

Reducing the negative impact of adverse environmental conditions on elementary-aged children and their families. Wilson, Cindy M., 1997. Practicum Report, Nova Southeastern University, Master's Programs in Life Span Care and Administration. Descriptors: Parent Support/School Parent Support/Parent Education/Low-income Families/School Parent Communication/Student Achievement/Drop-out Students/High Risk Factors.

Children who reside in neighborhoods characterized by a number of factors associated with a high stress environment, often struggle in a school setting. Poverty, social isolation and chronic family crisis are traits, which can sabotage children's ability to maximize their successes at school. Along with the environmental factors that negatively effect these children, parental support is often inconsistent in homes where this chaotic living style is present. Parents who must cope with high levels of stress often find it difficult to provide encouragement and attention to their children's efforts at school.

If additional support is not provided to these children and families in the early school years, the pattern of failure and lack of home support is established, well before the student reaches junior high age.

The author designed and implemented a practicum strategy that focused on one particular neighborhood, in a town with a population of 8500. The specific

target of the strategy were the families living in the part of the town with a high population concentration, and lower economic level, than other areas of the same town.

The children living in this neighborhood are served by one elementary school, from which the strategy was implemented. The practicum plan was formulated using the premise that a coordinated, community-based initiative should be implemented. Keeping this in mind, a three-phase plan was devised and followed through. The components of the practicum strategy were: a Community Resource Awareness and Utilization Questionnaire, a Parent Support Booklet for families living in the area, and a series of Parent Wellness Evenings, which were facilitated by community service providers with expertise in family support. School administrators and staff and parent councils, were very involved in the project from beginning to end.

The Community Resource Awareness and Utilization Questionnaire was returned by almost half the parents who received it. Information from the responses showed that the cost of programs was a major factor in the ability of families to make use of community resources. The Parent Support Booklet was rated highly by the parents who piloted this resource. It will be used on an ongoing basis with families who have children attending Clarke Elementary, the school where the project was implemented. Other schools in the area are considering

using the booklets as well, with their families. The Parent Wellness sessions will be facilitated during the next school year, with some modifications being made as a result of feedback offered from parents during the project.

At the completion of the project, the school division's administrators utilized the information obtained to help plan for an increase in student and family support at the elementary schools in the division. The project and subsequent report has helped to heighten awareness of the factors contributing to an environment of high-risk potential, and what can be done through the schools to off set the efforts of this type of living condition.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction and Background

Work Setting

The setting where this practicum was implemented is a school district in the western province of Alberta, Canada. Alberta is located between the Rocky Mountains that lie to the west, and the province of Saskatchewan to the east. The state of Montana is located directly south of the province and is approximately 200 kilometers away from the practicum location. This particular school division operates in the southern part of the province and includes sixteen public schools, which are divided into three geographic areas. Within each of these regions, there are a high percentage of rural families, surrounding a small town. In the town where the practicum was facilitated the vast majority of families are Caucasian.

The school where this practicum was based will be called Clarke Elementary for the purposes of this report. It is a relatively new school, having opened in September of 1993. It is situated on the outer edge of a town that will be known as Leeson. Population figures for Leeson in 1996 show it to have approximately 8500 residing within its boundaries. Two school systems operate within these boundaries. The public system, which employs the writer, has three elementary, one junior high, a junior-senior high school, and one school with children at the level of Early Childhood Services (ECS) to Grade 9. The Catholic system in Leeson has one elementary school and one high school.

Leeson has a wide variety of recreational facilities for children and families. These include: 2 golf courses, 6 indoor curling rinks, a recreation center with two indoor arenas

and a 4-lane swimming pool, numerous parks and playgrounds, bike trails, 11 ball diamonds, 12 soccer fields, a cultural center, public library, an outdoor skating rink, a campground, and a river park which runs through the middle of the town.

The town is located 35 kilometers away from the closest large city, Calgary, Alberta. Approximately 65% of working adults residing in Leeson, are employed in the city of Calgary. Another 10% work outside of the town in nearby urban areas. In 1993, the unemployment rate was 4.75%. Part-time workers make up 10% of the population, with homemakers comprising another 9%. The combination of closeness to the large city, and numerous amenities present within the town, has led to a quickly growing community. The population has increased from 3200 in 1979, to its present 8500, in 1997.

Clarke Elementary was chosen for this practicum due to the high number of children requiring support services from a variety of agencies in Leeson, as well as those in the nearby city. There appeared to be a concentration of families residing in this area of the town, who possess many of the indicators which have been used to define high-risk families. The school administration had discussed their wish to help meet the needs of these families, using the school as a base of support. As the counselor working with Clarke Elementary, it was felt the issues identified at this school, were definitely applicable to the guidelines of the practicum project in Family Support Studies.

Many of the children attending Clarke Elementary reside in subsidized housing units, or in the town's low rental district. The school population has grown quickly since first opening in 1993. Attendance numbers showed that the enrollment has increased from

268 pupils in June of 1994, to 383 in January 1997. The school program includes ECS through grade 6. The building is also used for a community pre-school program for children aged 3-4 years of age. Along with the regular academic program for grades ECS-6, the school is also responsible for the divisions' regional program for developmentally delayed children, of which there are anywhere from 8-10 at any given time.

The Student's Role in the Setting

The family school liaison worker for the public school system in the town of Leeson, is responsible for visiting three elementary schools, one junior high and one school with grades ECS-9 each week. Usually one full day is spent at each of the elementary schools, and a half day at the remaining two schools. Within the same region, there is also a large high school where the liaison worker is on-call for crisis situations and consultation with administration, or other counselors.

The family school liaison worker's primary task is to work with children in school who are experiencing difficulty, usually in a behavioral manner. The process is initiated by a referral from the teacher, principal, the parent of the child, or the child himself. After discussion with the referral source, an assessment of the child's situation is done, with the teacher and family involved in the process. From these interactions a plan is formulated on how to best meet the child's needs. Intervention may include one-to-one counseling, ongoing family support, behavior management strategies in the classroom, social skill groups, anger management skill building, or helping children and families learn coping skills to deal with a number of different situations they find themselves in. Crisis counseling

can also be provided to families who are experiencing significant turmoil in their lives due to a death in the family, divorce, physical violence, or other such major situations which impact a family and its children attending school.

Consultation with other agencies and service providers is a large part of the liaison workers' job. Significant communication is done with the local police department, recreational groups, private counselors, the provincial mental health worker, who works in Leeson 2 days a week, child protection workers, and medical doctors. Along with direct communication with these agencies, the liaison worker often spends time helping families learn how to access the services they need.

The family school liaison workers positions are funded by three major sources, the school division itself, the local municipal district, and the Community Social Services Advisory Board. All three of these agencies have given moneys to the position over the last five years, and have stated a commitment to continue to fund them in the foreseeable future. The school system from the board of trustees, to the teachers have recognized that there are a large number of children for whom school is a challenge, sometimes due to circumstances which have little to do with the school program itself. The school district has been very vocal in its commitment to do its best in ensuring all children receive the best education they can, and that support should be available for any child who requires added intervention in order that they can function successfully at school. Key community members residing in the town of Leeson have also verbalized the need to provide community support to the

families living here who are struggling to raise their children in times of stress, particularly brought on by financial hardship.

The Family School Liaison Worker is allotted one day per week to Clarke Elementary School as a general rule. The school division has emphasized the need for flexibility with the liaison worker positions, recognizing that the needs of schools change, and that a crisis situation takes priority over any set schedule. While at other schools in Leeson, there tends to be fluctuating need for the counseling services of the liaison worker, at Clarke Elementary, the need is consistently high. Often, intensive family support is needed, which requires a high degree of involvement with the families referred. Time is limited however, and it is the writer's perception that the needs of the families could be better met with a more coordinated, preventative plan of support.

Before the practicum project was even a discussion topic, the administration of Clarke Elementary was asking the question of how to address the problem of the large number of children who appeared to be lacking some of the basic necessities of life, when they arrived at school in the ECS program. Rather than relying on short-term responsive intervention, they were asking what type of support could be offered early on to help these families before a crisis occurred, or to augment parenting skills in order that the children could be more successful at school, no matter what type of socio-economic background they were living in. It was from discussions like these that the practicum project arose, and why this school was chosen as the setting. It was a wish to provide an established program of support, as a way of addressing an identified need at the school.

Previous to my employment as a family school liaison worker in this particular school division, most of my experience in the field of family support had been in a residential setting in the nearby city. In eleven years of employment at this residential institution, experience was gained with children from the age of 5-18 years of age. Many of these children had no natural family to return to after residential placement. Responsibilities in this work setting included developing coping curriculums for adolescents, as well as teaching life skills, running recreational programs, and utilizing behavior management skills. In the last five years of employment at this institution, responsibilities increased to staff training and evaluation, leading adolescent groups focusing on dealing with past abuse, and behaviors arising from being victimized at an early age. In my twelfth year of employment, my job changed to a more community-based position, where the task was to aid residential teens in their transition from a residential school, to a community school.

My work experience also included a six-month period of time as the director of a semi-independent living program for teens that no longer could live at home for a variety of reasons. In this role, responsibilities included supervising three children and youth care workers as they coordinated placements for 22 teens and the adult volunteers who shared their living arrangements. These volunteers provided support and adult direction to the teens, in exchange for moneys directed to subsidize their living expenses. My total years of experience working with high-needs children and families now totals 17 years.

With respect to educational background, the writer possesses a Bachelor of Physical Education, majoring in special needs programming. In 1986, the provincial Child and

Youth Care Certification Program was completed. This is a 2-year program completed while working, with close supervision by a trained therapist. Class instruction in the various aspects of child and youth treatment, and finally a 3 hour oral examination with a panel of professionals in the field of residential and community treatment planning, were requirements of the certification program. Training and education has also included various workshops and professional development courses, which have been taken over the years. The writer belongs to a number of professional organizations, including Active Parenting Today, The Child Care Workers Association of Alberta, and the Provincial Family School Liaison Worker Organization. In a desire to bring about community awareness and support, the writer has become heavily involved in two community groups whose goals are to ensure the well being of all members of the community. For the past two years the writer has been the chairperson of the Leeson Inter-Agency group, with members that include all agencies public, or private, who provide services to families in the Leeson area. The writer has also acted as co-chairperson for the Leeson working group, whose mandate is to help develop a community-based plan for delivering social services to the residents of Leeson and surrounding area, in a way which will prove to be more effective than in the past. Working directly with families as a support worker, and involvement in these two organizations, has helped the writer to gain valuable insight into the stresses on families today, and the impact these stresses can have on children in the home.

CHAPTER 2

The Problem

Problem Statement

The problem focused on in this practicum is the higher number of families in comparison to the other Leeson schools, referred to the liaison worker with issues of complex severity, who reside in one particular area of the town of Leeson. These referrals tend to be motivated from a concern that the child's basic safety and survival needs are not being met. Family violence or neglect issues are much more common for children who are referred from Clarke Elementary, than they are from any other school in Leeson. Whereas in the three other elementary schools intervention from the family school liaison worker is short-term and less intensive, referrals from Clarke Elementary often require longer-term, family-based intervention. Concern for the child in the family and neighborhood, is usually the reason for accessing help from the family school liaison worker, rather than a desire to stabilize the child's behavior in the classroom or school. As the family school liaison counselor who spends one day per week at this particular school, it has become obvious that there is a difference in the severity of the problems experienced by these children, when compared with children from the three other elementary schools in the same town.

Families in the neighborhood seem to be more involved with government child protection workers, and in-home family support services. Complaints of lack of supervision of children in this area, leading to vandalism and delinquency have been a major community

concern. Family violence incidents are also known to be higher in this neighborhood, than in other areas of Leeson.

It was the goal of this practicum to develop a strategy to reduce the number of children being referred where the family is in crisis, and the safety and welfare of the children is the primary concern.

Documentation of the Problem

TABLE 1

Referrals To Family School Liaison Worker By School

	SCHOOL YEAR			
SCHOOL	**1993/94**	**1994/95**	**1995/96**	**1996/97 (to Feb. 18/97)**
CLARKE ELEMENTARY	6 10	6 9	8 16	9 15
SCHOOL A	5 12	6 13	3 12	2 10
SCHOOL B	3 10	3 12	3 12	6 17
SCHOOL C	0 1	3 9	2 10	1 9

NOTE:

Top number = families involved with child protection, or where family violence has occurred.

Bottom number = total number of families referred that year.

Table 1 depicts the number of referrals, by individual schools, to the family school liaison worker since 1993. It also shows the number of referrals where child welfare workers have been involved, or family violence has been an issue in the household. The table compares the total number of referrals from each elementary school, and the severity of these referrals. It clearly shows that the percentage of serious family problems is higher from the families whose children attend Clarke Elementary. Between 50% and 70% of the children accessing the family school liaison worker have been involved with child protection or the police department, as a result of family violence issues. The rates are much lower in the other schools in the area.

TABLE 2

Number Of Students Registered By School

	SCHOOL YEAR			
SCHOOL	**1993/94**	**1994/95**	**1995/96**	**1996/97**
CLARKE ELEMENTARY	268	308	341	383
SCHOOL A	335	359	366	362
SCHOOL B	497	382	377	391
SCHOOL C	366	379	376	360

Table 2 illustrates the number of children attending these schools. These numbers are significant for two reasons. First, it is important to note that the attendance numbers

for Clarke Elementary have risen steadily since the school opened. There is no indication that the registrations of students from this area will slow down in the near future. In fact, as in many cases where a new school is built, the decision to build was based on the demographics of the area, and the projections that it is a growth area in the school division. This projected growth, in a high-needs area, would seem to suggest that the problems encountered now, would continue to occur, and probably increase as the numbers of families increase. The second reason these numbers are important is that they document that the higher total number of referrals to the family school liaison worker is not a result of a greater number of children attending this school. Presently the numbers of children at all public elementary schools in the area are quite similar. However, while growth has stabilized at the other schools, a continued rise in student registrations is expected at Clarke Elementary over the next few years.

Analysis of the Problem

There are many factors that contribute to the presence of the problem as it has been stated. Poverty, lack of social supports, and family violence, are traits in the neighborhood where this practicum was facilitated. In analyzing these factors, they will be discussed separately, with the understanding that evidence of any one of these conditions places great stress on a family. The presence of any combination of these situations, significantly increases the risk of serious emotional trauma being experienced by family members, particularly children.

Low-socioeconomic Level

Low-income in itself as a predictor of child abuse and neglect has been documented at length in family support literature.(Pecora, Whittaker, Maluccio, 1992., Bucker, 1993., Schorr, 1989). Schorr, in particular stresses the condition of poverty as being a major risk factor which leads to a vast array of other stressful conditions which families must cope with. "Persistent and concentrated poverty virtually guarantee the presence of a vast collection of risk factors and their continuing destructive impact over time." (Schorr, 1989, p. 29).

Clarke Elementary is situated in an area with a high concentration of subsidized and low-rent family housing. Almost without exception, referrals to the family school liaison worker originate with families living in this lower cost housing. The condition of poverty is very often a critical stress factor that these families are attempting to live with. In studies done comparing two similar neighborhoods in a number of North American cities, there was found to be strong correlation between income level and child maltreatment. In neighborhoods determined to be high risk due to the number of child abuse cases reported, the percentage of families living below the poverty line was much greater.(Kagan et al. 1994). In similar neighborhoods, where income levels were higher, the incidence of child abuse was much lower. Differences were also noted in the length of time families resided in the neighborhood, use of a telephone, and vacancy rates in the area. All of these factors are evidenced in the area where Clarke Elementary is located. Families are more transient,

absence of a phone, while not common, is certainly more prevalent than any other part of Leeson.

Another study completed at the University of North Carolina, looked at the long term effects of low family income and stressful life events, on reading achievement tests for 1,253 children. The results suggest that low income is a significant risk factor for children's achievement. At Clarke Elementary, reading levels of a number of the children are below grade level. Many children starting out in the early childhood program at 5 years of age can be identified as needing remedial instruction already. Meichenbaum, in his study on early indicators of school drop-outs in Ontario, Canada, found that children with reading levels two or more years behind at grade 4, were much more likely to drop out of school later on, than those students who were reading at grade level. (Meichenbaum, 1992)

This relation of poverty to dropout rate is significant because it speaks to the cycle of impoverishment in families. Parents who work at lower paying jobs head the majority of families living in low-income housing. Low socio-economic status denotes a life-style that makes it difficult for parents to set scholastic goals for their children, and provide the support needed to meet these goals. "Poor parents are viewed as especially in need of support programs because they have fewer material resources on which to draw and are often exposed to tremendous psychic overload. Therefore, they are less able to buffer their children's negative experiences or endorse those that lead to school success".(Kagan, Weisbourd, 1994 p. 56). Once a child attends school regularly, the expectations for academic achievement can become an added stress on families. For parents who have had

less than successful school experiences themselves, the experiences of their children can become reminders of the school-related issues. The cycle is then continued, with the child struggling to find success, and the parent unable to offer the emotional support needed for the child to meet the challenge. In a study done in the San Diego City School District, adolescents identified factors that were crucial in their ability to stay in school. Among these factors were, the need to have private time to do homework at home, and the need for parents to be more involved in their schooling and to offer more encouragement. (Ochoa, April, 1994).

Lack of Social Supports

Social supports can be divided into two types, informal and formal. Formal support systems include community resources such as schools, churches, hospitals, social agencies, and health clinics. These types of systems are characterized by the presence of hierarchical levels of authority, structured roles for personnel, and rules, policies and procedures that guide the organization and the behavior of its staff. (Germain, 1991). In contrast, informal support systems develop over time in a community. They are based on personal, face-to-face contact. "Informal systems are largely oriented to personal and collective satisfactions, emotional support, and participation in the life of the society and culture." (Germain, 1991. p. 64).

Social supports help to buffer families in times of crisis. Indeed, the presence of these support systems can prevent family crisis by helping families to cope with stresses that are a part of a family's evolution. They are a needed resource to any family. They provide a

gauge from which parents can compare their own life experiences, especially with respect to parenting practices. Schorr has written that," No one knows exactly how support operates to produce such significant effects. Its presence seems somehow to enable people to mobilize coping strategies and adaptive behaviors which, in turn, seem to reduce stress." (Schorr, 1988, p. 153).

Children living in conditions that prevent access to community resources, are deprived of experiences which have been shown to buffer children from the long-lasting effects of chronic poverty. They lose out on the opportunity to learn from others, be a part of a group, and escape the stresses usually present in an impoverished home. It is the children, who would benefit the most from these social supports, who are the least likely to be able to access them. In an informal assessment of community support services within the town of Leeson, done in the spring of 1996, a wide variety of resources were listed. Many of these would be characterized as formal supports. This survey determined that there were gaps in services, mainly affordable counseling services for adults and teens. A bigger issue of access to the present services was identified from the feedback offered from parents, and professionals who work with family support services in Leeson. Cost of the services simply made it impossible for poorer families to utilize many of the resources.

Being able to access social supports, even in a relatively small town, depends upon transportation. Families in the neighborhood of Clarke Elementary are less able to provide this transportation. Evidence of this rests in the fact that bussing is provided to families in this area, free of charge, due to the fact that the school division recognizes the need for this

service. Many families have one vehicle, which is used by the parent(s) for employment. The distance to the school is too far to walk for many of the younger children in the neighborhood, therefore the bussing has been offered. This service is not without controversy. The school is frequently notified of behavioral problems at the bus stops or on the school bus itself. Suspending children from riding the bus has resulted in complaints from the community, of vandalism occurring on the way to school, by the children suspended. The students who attend Clarke Elementary have subjected parents who have volunteered to supervise the bus stops to profanity and noncompliance behavior. The occurrence of these behaviors clearly supports the premise that any strategy developed to meet the needs of this population, needs to be community based, not simply another service offered by the school itself.

Social supports are difficult to establish in neighborhoods where there is a high degree of transience. Relationships take time to form. In lower income families, moving frequently is often a reality. Employment and low-cost housing, are reasons cited in many cases for families moving frequently. Families referred to the family school liaison worker from Clarke Elementary have usually moved at least three times in the last six years. Another reason these families have moved is to avoid ongoing intervention and follow-up from child protection workers. Moving from another province, or out of a large urban center, helps these families to sidestep government workers who are overworked and may not have the time, energy, or mind set, to track families not seen as top priority on their caseload.

With a high concentration of these transient families moving in and out of one area, the social supports are not only unlikely to be established, the ones that are established may be detrimental, rather than supportive.(Flach, 1988). In neighborhoods such as these, it is not necessarily the motivation to help, which is lacking. It is rather the case where those people who might provide needed support can't, because they themselves are depleted.(Schorr, 1988).

Family Violence

A large percentage of the children involved with the family school liaison worker at Clarke Elementary have been witness to, or the direct victims of, family violence. In literally all cases, the abuse was determined to be a long-standing problem in the family. Spousal abuse by the father figure towards the mother has often been a part of the violent household. In The Child Welfare Challenge, the factors of poverty and lack of social supports are cited as leading precursors to child abuse. (Pecora, et. al., 1992). Recent findings that indicate a strong correlation between alcohol abuse and family violence, are mirrored in the neighborhood specific to this proposal. Alcohol abuse is high among those families referred to the family school liaison worker.

The combination of alcohol abuse and violence in the home, lead to an unstructured, insecure living environment for children. Children need security, warmth, and a sense of stability in their lives, from the time they are born. To not be able to experience this, leads to a sense of chaos, and an unawareness of the structure necessary to grow into self-

confident, capable individuals. Without this structure modeled throughout the childhood years, the cycle continues when these individuals grow up and have children of their own.

In 1995, the Board of Education, in Ontario, Canada, looked at children at risk for antisocial behavior at school. When determining family characteristics of these children, violence in the family was one of the contributing factors, along with poor parental management and communications, unclear boundaries, inconsistent roles and rules of discipline, and contradictory behavioral standards. (Cole, 1995).

The police department in Leeson does not keep family violence statistics specific to neighborhoods. In conversation with their personnel, they have commented on the number of domestic violence incidents in this particular area of town. Their perception is that this is a high need area due to the economic situation, and the population density. They also feel that the fact that there are so many young families in the area, leads to added stress on the parents and results in family violence.

The contributing factors identified and discussed, each can have a detrimental effect on any family. In combination, they significantly increase the risk to children of experiencing serious emotional trauma. The intervention strategy developed in this practicum will not be able to address each of these factors in singular form. It must focus on the cumulative effect of these factors, and the needs of the children living under these conditions.

CHAPTER 3

Goals and Objectives

Goal:

The overall goal of this practicum is to reduce the negative impact of adverse environmental conditions that jeopardize children's school competence and overall well being. It has been established that the higher number of severe family crisis originates in an area of Leeson where low socio-economic status is a reality. Therefore any strategy to reduce the number of families where child abuse and neglect occur, must be developed with the awareness of the impact of the stresses in the families day-to-day functioning. Three objectives have been established for this practicum.

Objectives:

Objective #1: The specific needs of the families, and the level of awareness of the family support resources available within the community will be identified through a Knowledge and Use of Community Resources Survey questionnaire. A return rate of at least 40% is expected. A summary of the findings from the need assessment will be included in this practicum report.

Objective #2: To systematically help families in establishing support networks in the community, a Parent Support Booklet will developed and offered to ten families, who have children registered at the school. Families new to the area will be given priority in this endeavor. It is expected that 80% will show a level of satisfaction with the kit.

Objective #3: At least 20 parents will participate in a minimum of three out of four parent support sessions conducted during the 10 week implementation phase. 80% of those in attendance will show an increase of knowledge on the topics presented, as measured through a pre-test and post-test conducted at each session.

CHAPTER 4

Solution Strategy

Review of Existing Programs, Models, and Approaches

There is a wealth of information on programs that attempt to address the needs of children living in conditions characterized by a number of high-risk factors. The most effective of these programs are developed from an ecological approach to family support. Bronfenbrenner, a key researcher of family support programs, has established factors that are present in current models of successful programs. "These include a recognition of the interdependence of family members, the influence of the family on the individual, the importance of social support from people outside the immediate family, and the powerful effect of wider environmental factors, such as poverty, on the family." (Bronfenbrenner in Kagan et al., 1987. p.9). Lisbeth Schorr, stated in her book, Within Our Reach-Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage "...the programs that succeed in helping children and families in the shadows are intensive, comprehensive, and flexible. They also share an extra dimension, more difficult to capture: Their climate is created by skilled, committed professionals who establish respectful and trusting relationships and respond to the individual needs of those they serve. The nature of their services, the terms on which they are offered, the relationships with families, the essence of the programs themselves---all take their shape from the needs of those they serve rather than from the precepts, demands, and boundaries set by professionals and bureaucracies" (Schorr, 1988 p. 259) In researching a variety of family support programs, there was found to be a number which met

the criteria stated above. In establishing a project plan for this practicum, the following programs were found to be highly successful in the way in which they delivered support, in a respectful, comprehensive manner.

Providing a Sure Start (PASS), (Goetz, Kathyrn (ed.) 1992) is one program under the umbrella of Lessie Bates Davis Neighborhood House. It is a prevention program, focusing on young children, infants through toddlers, who are living in environmentally at-risk conditions. The objectives of the program are very similar to the ones established in this practicum proposal. While the scope of PASS is much broader due to the larger urban center it is situated in, two components of the intervention model are very similar to the ones being proposed for this practicum project. PASS focuses on parent education, and interagency networking as a means to mobilize needed services to its families. Both of these components are seen as critical to the success of any family support plan arising developed for this project.

Way To Grow, (Goetz, Kathyrn (ed.) 1992) a program operating in Minneapolis is another program with a mission to help families make better use of existing services, build social support networks and to identify environmental factors which are deterrent to a child's success in school. A focus of their program is also to raise public awareness as to these factors and their impact on children's healthy development. It is interesting to note that this program arose from a study of unemployment prevention, and the subsequent recommendation to develop a comprehensive plan for the delivery of early childhood services as a means to reduce the unemployment rate. The fact that the program is

supported strongly by the business community, is evidence to the efforts of the original planners and their ability to show the relationship between healthy children and a higher employment rate.

Effective Parenting Information For Children (EPIC) (Goetz, Kathyrn (ed.) 1992) is a program originally operating in the greater Buffalo, N.Y. area. It is an interactive program involving schools, home, and the community. The program is one that closely resembles the intent of this practicum, as it is based from a school setting, but involves a total community commitment. The services offered through EPIC include parent education workshops, community coordination of services, and classroom presentations directed towards raising self-esteem, and teaching responsible behavior. Participants evaluate the program on an ongoing basis, using pre-and post tests and workshop evaluations. EPIC is one comprehensive program that targets children from grades 1-12. In this way, it is unique from many other intervention models, which target either pre-school, elementary-aged children, adolescents, or parents. Few programs are able to meet the needs of such a wide range of participants.

In the majority of programs reviewed where the target population is low-income and living in environmental conditions of high stress, interventions are intense, and personal. Families living in these conditions need to respond to the humanness of the program and establish a relationship of trust with its personnel. Once this mutually respectful relationship is established, the family can then become a partner in the process of change, rather than simply a receiver of well-intended advice from a stranger. The recent

development of Family School Liaison Programs in the province of Alberta, Canada has been implemented, keeping this philosophy in mind.

These programs are characterized by a wide range of flexibility and are all based in a school with an outreach component to them. All place an emphasis on helping disadvantaged children gain success in school, and direct their energies towards families, rather than individuals. Evaluations of these programs have so far focused on short-term successes. This is natural since the intervention model is quite new to the school systems. These short-term evaluations have mainly taken the form of client satisfaction surveys (clients including the families, teachers, and administrators who have utilized the services of the liaison workers). The vast majority of the feedback received has indicated that the program is very successful, and should be expanded in many school divisions. The other component, which illustrates the success of these programs, is their ability to attain funding from a number of local sources, thereby increasing the awareness of the needs of families, and the community responsibility on helping to meet these needs.

The Family School Liaison Worker Programs resemble a case management model that has been field-tested in elementary communities in the states of Washington and Idaho. The model involves the interprofessional case management of students who have been identified as potential dropouts. C-STARS (Center for the Study of At-Risk Students) (Smith, Albert, J. Jr. 1995) operates with the theory that: 1. children and families experiencing concurrent problems often need help from more than one resource, and 2. often these families have special difficulty in using available help successfully. The C-Stars

model identifies the benefits of school-based management for children and families who require specialized assistance from a number of professionals or community resources. These benefits include advocacy for the student, accessibility to the case coordinator, and effective utilization of the communication between home, school, and supplemental resources.

In reviewing other models of family support programs, it was found that the vast majorities are accessible after a family has experienced a major crisis. Child abuse and neglect, family violence, teen-age delinquency, are often the criteria on which it is determined whether family support is needed. These also seem to be the criteria on which funding sources rely before making the decision to fund a particular program. There are few family support programs where families can attain professional, intensive, respectful help from a skilled professional, before they find themselves in a serious crisis. The programs that are available to families, are either diluted attempts to replicate another program, or they must charge a fee to families who are having trouble clothing and feeding them. This seems particularly true in smaller urban centers, or rural communities, where there is a lack of professionals trained to work with families, and a lack of finances to fund the programs even if the need is clearly identified.

Proposed Solution Strategy

The solution strategy proposed for this practicum involved (Appendix A) the coordination of the school division, in particular Clarke Elementary school staff, parents, community members involved with family resources, and the family school liaison worker.

The strategy focuses on identifying the needs of the families in the area, and providing supports to counter the negative effects of the environmental conditions surrounding many of these families. In a ten-week period, information was collected from the families themselves, and a 4-session Family Wellness Program was developed, implemented, and evaluated.

To clearly identify the needs of the families in the area, a Community Resource Awareness and Utilization Questionnaire and covering letter (Appendix B and C) was sent out to all families in the first week of the practicum. (Appendix C) The assessment forms were included with student report cards, which were sent out at the same time. Parents were asked for feedback on what are the specific stresses in their lives, and what resources they are aware of that they could benefit from, in the town of Leeson. A return date was set for one week from the assessment being delivered to the families. Interviews were conducted with 10 families from the area, to gain more in-depth insight from the parents' point of view. The school division offered an incentive to parents returning the assessment, in the form of two door prizes to be awarded from those questionnaires returned. Data from the assessments and interviews was studied, and a list of needs was established. This information was delivered to the school personnel and the Leaning Support Team of the school. Information from the need assessment will be used to set future goals, and long-term support, after the ten-week project is completed.

A Parent Support Booklet (Appendix D) was chosen as the initial step in meeting the needs of the families who were the focus of this practicum. It is known that the living

conditions for many of these families place an inordinate amount of stress on parents. Often this stress leads to situations that put the children's safety at risk. Prevention of these situations was the goal of this practicum. Knowing that social isolation, and unawareness of resources are factors which lead to stress in a family, the practicum project addressed these needs first.

The Parent Support Booklet was piloted with ten families living in the area for less than a year. The booklet included information about resources in the area and how to access these resources. During the project, the booklet was delivered, and discussed by the student with the families. The families evaluated the usefulness of the booklet with a client satisfaction questionnaire. (Appendix E) The feedback they offered helped to determine whether changes need to be made to improve the effectiveness of the resource. The evaluation and subsequent findings are included in the practicum report. Parent council members were asked to evaluate the booklet as well. In total, it was expected that 10 adults would complete the evaluations on the usefulness of the Parent Support Booklet. The feedback from the evaluations will be used to help the writer determine what changes need to be made to the booklet, before establishing it as an ongoing part of the schools orientation.

The second step of the practicum project was to revise the information in the booklet, based on the completed parent evaluations. While this was being done, it was hoped a volunteer component would be initiated with parents at the school. These volunteers would introduce the Parent Support Booklet to any new families in the area, soon

after they register their children at the school. The booklet would become a part of the registration procedure. In this way, families would receive the information they need that will help them to establish themselves in the community. Contact would be made with other parents in a non-threatening manner, and the new parents will make a personal connection with someone who also has children attending the school.

The family school liaison worker will remain involved after the volunteer component is established. After new families have been given the Parent Support Booklet, the liaison worker will meet with the families on an individual basis. This is the next step in the project plan. This contact will serve two purposes, the first being an informal assessment of the family's needs by the liaison worker, and second, to establish a relationship between the worker and the parent in an atmosphere free of tension and frustration. Presently the first contact the liaison worker has with the family is usually in a crisis situation. In order for more families to access the support of the liaison worker before a crisis occurs, the awareness level must be raised of what the service is and how family's can benefit from utilizing the resource of the liaison worker.

It should be noted that the parent booklet and the visit by the family school liaison worker will occur with all families registering their children at Clarke Elementary. This service is seen as being useful to all families, no matter what socio-economic level they are living at. While the project is directed towards the area where the highest level of need has been identified, it is a certainty that any new family in a community can benefit from this outreach service.

The third strategy to be implemented was a 4-session parent education workshop. This was entitled a Family Wellness Series. The sessions were offered in the evening, to parents who have children attending Clarke Elementary. The emphasis was on establishing connections between parents in the community, and teaching some basic parent education. Evaluations and attendance numbers were indicators of the success of these evening sessions.

CHAPTER 5

Strategy Employed-Action Taken and Results

Action Taken

The initial step of the strategy, was implemented with no modification necessary. The knowledge and use of Community Resource Questionnaire was sent out with the student's report cards, ensuring all families with children at Clarke Elementary received the forms. A note was placed in the school newsletter a week prior to the forms being sent out, in order for parents to gain a better understanding of the project and the need for their input in the endeavour.

Once the questionnaires were returned, ten respondents were contacted by phone and interviewed about their responses to the forms. The ten chosen had either made specific comments about the resources listed, or had made suggestions for future, family support initiatives. The parents contacted spoke freely about their rationale for answering the survey as they did and why they felt the need for specific parent support programs in the area. These interviews lasted longer than expected, due to this sharing of feelings and ideas. The time spent though was certainly one of the highlights of the project, bringing a personal perspective to an otherwise somewhat impersonal method of information assessment.

The second part of the strategy, developing the Parent Support Booklet and piloting it was also carried out in much the same manner as originally proposed. The booklets were designed with input from school staff, parent Council, and parents of children at Clarke Elementary whom the liaison worker had been involved with in providing family support.

One modification was made as to which parents piloted the booklets. Instead of the ten patents that were interviewed in the initial phase of the project, the booklets were studied by seven of these parents, one local health service provider and two sets of patents in the neighborhood with professional career backgrounds.

It was felt that feedback from a wider rage of participants was needed to ensure the booklets could be useful to all families no matter what environment or economic conditions were present in the home. The satisfaction surveys were slow in being returned by some parents, necessitating a follow-up phone call in some cases. As the booklets required more time on the parents part to read and then provide feedback on what was read, it was understandable that reminders were needed as to the time constraints for the completion of the satisfaction surveys. All parents responded quickly after the second request for the feedback forms to be returned to the school.

The third component, the Patent Wellness Sessions, were facilitated at Clarke Elementary on a bi-weekly basis during the project phase. Topics for the evenings were:

Session #1:	Stress Management
Session #2:	Teaching Your Child To Behave
Session #3:	Communicating With Your Child
Session #4:	Bullying-Victims, Bullies, and Bystanders

These topics were decided upon in conjunction with the parent council members of the school. Volunteers from Grade 6 provided baby-sitting at the school. Parent council, and parent participants of the sessions donated refreshments. The offer of transportation

was made through the school newsletter for those who needed this service. No one informed the school that they could utilize this offer.

The sessions were held in the school library and ran for one and a half-hours every second Wednesday evening. All presenters offered their services free of charge. The week prior to their specific session, the author and each presenter discussed what to include and how to administer the pre and post-tests for their session. These tests were color-coded for easy sorting with pre-tests being one color, post-tests another color. The two tests were then stapled together in order to ensure each participant's tests did not become confused with another parent's while they were bring collected. By using this method, comparison of the pre and posttests knowledge was easier to accomplish.

Results

Outcome #1: It was expected that 40% of families receiving the Knowledge and Use of Community Resources Questionnaire would complete and return the form. This estimate was surpassed as a total of 115 out of a possible 238 forms were returned. These numbers translate to a 48% return rate.

While the majority of respondents did indicate that they were aware of many community resources, 26 answered that they were unaware of two or more services, or didn't know how to access these services. 18 families identified cost as being a barrier to their utilization. The other significant obstacle to resource utilization noted by parents was the scheduling of programs. Many of the parents indicated they worked shift work and found it difficult to attend structured parenting classes because of their schedule.

Specific suggestions for new programs, made by parents on the questionnaires included:

Parent support group	*8 requests*
Support group for children and parents experiencing divorce	*2 requests*
Support group for families in a medical crisis	*2 requests*

Some parents also made suggestions concerning the current services available. These were; lower the cost of recreational programming for children, offer parenting classes in the day-time, not always in the evening, and, lower the cost of adult education classes given in Leeson, particularly the computer courses.

Outcome #2: It was expected that 80% of parents who received a Parent Support Booklet, would indicate satisfaction with the format and contents. In fact, 100% rated the booklet as either good, very good, or excellent.

There were no suggestions to change the format or the information in the booklet. All parents said it would be have been helpful to have been given the booklet when they first moved to the community. They felt the information in the booklet would be particularly useful to new families just moving into the community.

Outcome #3: It was expected that 20 parents would attend three out of four parent support sessions conducted during the implementation phase and that 80% would show an increase of knowledge as measured through pre and post tests administered at the sessions.

This objective was partially met, with attendance at the sessions numbering from a low of five to a high of twelve participants. Knowledge of the subject matter was shown to be quite high on both the pre and posttests reflecting the fact that the parents in attendance

already possessed basic information concerning the evening's topics. In discussing the low attendance rate with parents in attendance, school personnel, and parents who did not attend, there were found to be specific reasons cited as to why the participant rate was so low. The main reason mentioned was the time of year. The parent wellness sessions were initiated at the same time as community spring recreational activities for children were beginning. Many parents register their children in soccer, baseball, rollerhockey, swimming, and are involved in these same types of activities themselves. The wellness sessions were competing with outdoor activities, at a time of year when community members look forward to the end of the winter months, and time outside after months of cold weather. Parents commented that the sessions would be more successful if held in the fall and winter months. Further to this, they requested that the sessions be scheduled in four-week intervals, and with more of them during the school year. With respect to the high scores on the pre-tests completed at the sessions, the parent's interpretation of these results was that many of them had been to some type of parenting class at least once, previous to these evening sessions. They commented that the basic knowledge base they had, they felt good about. What they determined to be the significant helpful factor during the sessions, was the opportunity to talk with other parents. There was a consensus that the discussions during the evening were the highlight of the wellness program. In fact, during all four sessions, even though attendance was low in numbers, time ran short to complete the presentations because of the sharing of parenting experiences among the participants.

Another reason that attendance numbers were not what were expected, was probably related to the method of notifying parents of the evenings. The school newsletter was used and the daily communication book utilized by Clarke Elementary students. This method of notification may not have bee effective as it relied on student to parent communication. There was not way of ensuring that parents read the newsletter or the daily communication books. Comments from parents towards the end of the sessions confirmed this suspicion as many stated they were unaware of the parenting evenings being held at the school.

The evenings were not announced in the town newspaper because of the goal of the practicum. The target population was those families in one particular area of Leeson. The paper would have notified everyone in the town who receives a weekly paper. It was felt that this method would jeopardize the outcome results, as participants would have attended from neighborhoods outside the target area specified.

Although not all the practicum outcomes were completely achieved, it was felt that the project as a whole was a success. School administrators, parent participants, parent council members, and community people who were a part of the project, all verbalized the necessity to analyze the reasons for the identified problem at the school, and begin to make plans to meet the needs of children who were at risk of failure. It was felt that this project did much to identify statistically the heightened need of the students who attend Clarke Elementary school and some strategies which can be used to meet these identified needs.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion-Implications and Recommendations

Summary of Project

This practicum project included three distinct, yet related components: The Community Resource Awareness and Utilization Questionnaire, The Parent Support Booklet, and the Parent Wellness Sessions. The initial step in the project plan surpassed the desired outcome of achieving a 40% return rate. 48% of parents returned the forms, with many offering suggestions and comments reflecting their feelings towards current services and possible future resources. Previous to the questionnaire being sent out, it was felt that unawareness was a probable factor in the under use of community resources by the families living in this area of Leeson. Results of the survey contradicted this theory somewhat, as most parents answered that they were aware of may services and resources. Cost of the resources, particularly those of recreational nature, was a consistent obstacle noted in the questionnaires. A number of parents commented that they wished to have access to a parent support group in order to help them with crisis situations or simply in their role as a parent.

The second component, the Parent Support Booklet surpassed the stated outcome of 80% of parents rating it as a positive resource. 100% of those parents who received the booklets rated them as good, very good, or excellent resource. No modifications were necessary to the booklets and they will be utilized in the upcoming school year as part of the registration process for new parents moving into the area. The use of the booklets with other elementary schools in the area is being discussed. There is a strong possibility that at

least one other school will utilize the resource with their new families. Also, information contained in the booklet may be included in newsletters sent out to parents from the schools. This is another way to enhance parent-school communication and build a feeling of mutual support in the raising of the children in the community.

The third segment of the project, The Parent Wellness Sessions, was the least successful in terms of meeting the desired outcome objectives. However, it was the most successful in initiating discussions around the school, with parents and staff, on how to meet the needs of students possessing high-risk factors in their home environment. From discussions with these groups it would appear that this component of the project has the most potential for ongoing follow-up from the school staff and parents from Clarke Elementary. Low attendance at the wellness sessions was a concern. Some factors contributing to this low participation have been mentioned in the previous chapter (time of year, frequency of sessions). Another cause from the practicum student's point of view, was that the parents who were most in need of outside support, would not have been comfortable attending the group session format at the school. The parents who did attend were quite verbally articulate, some with a professional background (teacher, teacher assistants). Their economic status appeared to be at the middle income level. They could socialize, speak freely amongst themselves during the classes and at breaks. They presented themselves as caring, involved parents whose goal was to augment their parenting skills in order to handle daily routines and normal childhood misbehaviors effectively. They dressed informally, yet

fashionably. And many of them already knew each other either from activities involving their children at school, or in the community.

The target population for this project were the families who tend to be of lower socio-economic background, whose ability to parent their children may be at risk due to lack of knowledge and/or a high level of stress in the household involving a number of factors addressed in chapters 1 and 2 of this report. Many of these families have been open to individual family support offered in their home by a worker whom they have established a relationship with. These same families may not have felt comfortable in a group setting, and it is the students perception that the format of the parent wellness sessions may not be the appropriate method of delivering support to the families requiring more intensive and personal support. Group discussions require a certain amount of trust, and social awareness. Families experiencing daily stress, and almost daily crisis, need to be able to relate their family story, and make a personal connection with those in the role of support person. In a formal group setting this is difficult. There simply isn't enough time to establish the needed trust, be listened to at length, or provide a level of attention warranted to the individual parent.

Implications for Future Implementation

Findings from the Community Resource Awareness and Utilization Questionnaire have already been shared with the town of Leeson's interagency group. It was apparent in discussions with some respondents, that the information they had concerning costs of adult courses from some of the educational upgrading services, was inaccurate. Costs for some of

these courses are very minimal, at times requiring no monetary output from the student at all. This would lead one to believe that the perception in the community needs to be corrected, and accurate information needs to be more available. The coordinator of the program that seemed the most misunderstood, has been informed of the issue, and has begun to take steps in the community to clarify the cost and mandate of her program.

The information gained from the questionnaire will also be shared with school division administration, and most importantly, the recreational and continuing education coordinator for the town of Leeson. This will be done through a meeting with the liaison worker, the coordinator, and at least two town council members. As there exists presently a very strong, human service-based council, it is felt that the information will be considered as they plan for family resources and supports.

A copy of this practicum report will be given to the coordinators from The Commissioner of Services to Children and Families office. These professionals are in charge of soliciting advice from a wide number of residents in the province, on how to better manage children and family services. Much work has already been done by the government of the province on this issue. The information in this report will be useful to them when they analyze what the needs are in the town of Leeson and vicinity, and how to implement services.

It is important for these decision-makers to have evidence as to what works, and what doesn't work for some families. The fact that not all parts of the practicum met all outcome objectives, gives us information which will help to plan for all families. Even

though the target area was small for this project, the results are important because of the comparison of the population residing in this neighborhood, to other small communities with the same characteristics.

The Parent Support Booklets are being considered for use next year as a part of the support system between home and school at Clarke Elementary. The decision needs to be made as to whether the booklets should be offered only to new families moving into the area, or should they be made available to all parents whose children attend the school. This decision will be based on financial resources, as the booklets themselves have been identified as an appropriate resource that the school would like to use.

It is the students feeling that other schools in the area will use the booklets as well, as interest has been expressed by other administrators to view the finished product, and make use of them within their own schools.

With respect to the Parent Wellness Evenings, the most modifications are necessary, before implementing them as an ongoing part of the schools parent support service. Discussions with administrators, and parents in attendance of the sessions, have resulted in some changes for the next attempt at these parent evenings.

During the 1997/98 school year, the sessions will occur on a monthly basis. These evenings will be announced on the first day of school, when many of the parents are in attendance with their children. The sessions will be emphasized at this time as an important part of the working relationship between home and school. Advertising of the parent evenings will be done through the weekly newspaper, the school newsletter, and the child's

daily communication book. Parent participants will determine the format for the evenings as the desire for a more informal, parent support discussion group has been stated numerous times and was requested in the survey done.

More energy and focus will have to be placed on reaching the parents who were the original target of the project. Their attendance and participation must continue to be the objective as the goal remains to provide support to children and families living in stressful home environments. In order to achieve this goal, the causes of the low attendance must be considered and modifications made to address the reality that the parents, who were the focus of the project, did not attend the Wellness Sessions.

In future, parents already involved with the family school liaison worker at Clarke Elementary, will be personally invited by the worker and asked to bring a friend to the evenings. The personal connection that is already established with the liaison worker should help raise the comfort level of the parent(s) attending the group sessions. Being accompanied by a friend should also facilitate this goal.

Another possible strategy achieve more involvement from parents living in the neighborhood is to utilize the parent volunteers at the school as contact people. Twenty volunteers could be assigned ten parents to phone and invite to the initial evening at the beginning of the school year. This personal contact with other parents would bring an increased sense of community ownership and participation to the project. During the initial meeting all parents would have the opportunity to discuss the format for the sessions held

during the year. This would help to ensure the parents' actual wishes were being responded to, not only those perceived by the service providers or school staff.

Conclusion

This project was successful in many ways, as verified through the outcome objective results. It has shown that for this situation, at one school, a strategy to help provide parent support truly did become a community endeavor. The project heightened awareness of the issue within the school staff, the school division, and the community. It is the wish of the practicum student that this project aids in the task of advocating for ongoing support to families in need. Ideally, it will be used as evidence that parents and children, living in conditions characterized by high stress levels, can and do benefit from a variety of interventions aimed at helping them cope with this environment, thereby reducing the amount of daily stress in their lives. Children in impoverished conditions are not predisposed to a life of low living standards, and ongoing crisis. School can be a place of success and positive challenges. Parents must be involved with their children's efforts in the academic and social world of school. The partnership between the school staff, and the parent is crucial. This project is an example of one endeavor, which the student feels was successful in bridging the gap between the school and parent. At present, there is every intention that the end of the practicum is really the beginning of what will be a continued effort to meet the needs of families in the town of Leeson, particularly those residing in the area which was the target for the project.

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APPENDIX A

TEN-WEEK IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Week One:

- Present practicum project at regular Parent Council Meeting.
- Distribute Community Resource Awareness and Use Questionnaire to families with report cards.
- Make contact with 10 families to be interviewed in conjunction with the need questionnaire, and set appointment times with these families over the next two weeks.
- Begin to interview the targeted families and collect data.
- Establish dates for the Parent Wellness Evenings, with school personnel.
- Invite community guest presenters to be involved in the Family Wellness Evenings.
- Send out notices to families, informing them of the dates, times and topics of the evening sessions, and rationale for the program.

Week Two:

- Collect need assessments from the school, where they are to be returned to by the respondents.
- Finish interviewing the remaining families, and analyze their feedback to the need assessment.
- Begin to collect information to be included in the Parent Support Booklet.
- Confirm speakers for the Parent Wellness Evenings to be held at the school.

Week Three: (Clarke Elementary is closed for Easter Break during this time).

- Write report on data obtained from the needs assessments and interviews.
- Continue to collect community resource material, and parenting information to be used in the Parent Support Booklets.
- Finalize parent satisfaction questionnaire to be used in the evaluation of the parent education evening sessions.

Week Four:

- Coordinate the first evening session of the parent wellness series at Clarke Elementary.
- Collect completed evaluations and reviewed comments.
- Continue to develop the Parent Support Booklet, in a user-friendly format.

Week Five:

- Finalize the information to be included in the Parent Support Booklet, and the format to be used in the presentation of this information.
- Discuss the practicum strategy and its implementation to date with parent council, and school administration.
- Insert an article in the school newsletter, explaining the Family Wellness Evenings, and encouraging parents to participate. Also, thank parents for their participation in the need assessment, and announce the winners of the door prizes drawn from the completed forms.

Week Six:

- Distribute the Parent Support Booklets to the ten targeted families, and parent council members. Include evaluation forms with the kits, and request their return in one week's time.
- Coordinate the second session in the Family Wellness Series.
- Collect evaluations and reviewed the information in these.

Week Seven:

- Review feedback from parents who were given the Parent Support Booklets. Where necessary, contact parents to gain clarification on the feedback they offered.
- Start to make adjustments as needed.

Week Eight:

- Coordinate the third evening session for parents.
- Collect and review evaluations.
- Establish the final version of the Parent Support Booklets.

Week Nine:

- Present the final version of the Parent Survival Kits to the school staff, including the reason for any changes from the original version.
- Inform school staff on how the parent education evening sessions are progressing, and answered questions they had.

Week Ten:

- Facilitate the last parent education evening.

- Collect evaluations and reviewed these.
- Finish analyzing the feedback from parents on the sessions, and write outline of final report, including attendance numbers at all sessions.
- Insert an article in the school newsletter, thanking key people who were involved in the project, including the families who were interviewed as part of the resource questionnaire.
- Start to plan how to implement the project on an ongoing basis with school administration, and identified community resources.

APPENDIX B

COMMUNITY RESOURCE AWARENESS AND UTILIZATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer the following questions using the criteria below, by checking the appropriate answer. If you have not used the resources, please fill in the appropriate blank with the letter that best explains why you have not used it.

I am aware of the following resources
I have used the resource
Reasons why I have not used this resource:

a. Not needed
b. Unaware of it
c. Too expensive
d. Don't know how to access
e. Other _____

An example response would be: 4. Food Bank
Aware of X Have Used ___ Have not used because 2

1. Adult Education Upgrading	Aware of ___	Have Used ___	Have not used because ___
2. Alberta Mental Health Counseling Services	Aware of ___	Have Used ___	Have not used because ___
3. Family School Liaison Worker Program	Aware of ___	Have Used ___	Have not used because ___
4. Food Bank	Aware of ___	Have Used ___	Have not used because ___
5. Health Unit – Parenting Courses	Aware of ___	Have Used ___	Have not used because ___
6. Subsidized Housing	Aware of ___	Have Used ___	Have not used because ___
7. Alcoholics Anonymous	Aware of ___	Have Used ___	Have not used because ___
8. Recreational Programs at the Trio Plex	Aware of ___	Have Used ___	Have not used because ___
9. Youth Clubs (i.e. Cubs, Brownies, Junior Forest Wardens, etc.)	Aware of ___	Have Used ___	Have not used because ___
10. Public Library	Aware of ___	Have Used ___	Have not used because ___
11. Daycare/Dayhome	Aware of ___	Have Used ___	Have not used because ___
12. Pre-Kindergarten Programs	Aware of ___	Have Used ___	Have not used because ___
13. Cultural/Recreational Programs at the Station	Aware of ___	Have Used ___	Have not used because ___
14. Adult Recreational Programs	Aware of ___	Have Used ___	Have not used because ___

Please comment on the need for other services that are not listed, but you and your family would find beneficial. (E.g. ADHD Support Group, Parent Support Group, Family Crisis Support)

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APPENDIX C

COMMUNITY RESOURCE AWARENESS AND UTILIZATION QUESTIONNAIRE

(Covering Letter)

Mrs. C. Wilson, the Family School Liaison Counselor, who works at the school one day a week, is doing a Community Resource Awareness and Utilization Survey. Parents are being asked to complete this questionnaire and return it to the school by March 25th. Completed forms can be turned in to your child's teacher, or at the front office.

Information from the survey will be helpful in discussions about what the needs of families are, and how present resources can meet these needs more effectively. The information will also be useful in developing new programs for families in the area. Mrs. Wilson works with a variety of community agencies, primarily in the area of family support and crisis intervention. Feedback from Clarke Elementary families is important for the planning of how the school community can work with parents as they support their children at school, at home, and in the community.

All answers will be kept strictly confidential. Personal contact will be made with 10 randomly selected families in order to gain more in-depth information. From all returned questionnaires, two door prizes will be awarded. Results of the survey will appear in an upcoming newsletter.

Thank you in advance for your support of this project.

APPENDIX D

CLARKE ELEMENTARY

Parent Support Booklet

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Community Resources

2. Parent-School Communication

3. Supporting the Learner at Home

4. Parenting Tips

APPENDIX E

CLARKE ELEMENTARY PARENT SUPPORT BOOKLET

Satisfaction Survey

In order for this booklet to be as helpful as possible to parents whose children attend Clarke Elementary School, would you please complete the following survey. The booklet is intended to be a resource for parents when they register their children at the school. When new families move into the area and enroll their children at the school, these booklets will be offered to them. It is hoped that the information will be useful if they are new to the area, and in providing some basic guidelines to help ensure a successful relationship between the school and the parents.

Please rate the following statements on a 1 - 5 scale.

1-Excellent 2-Very Good 3-Good 4-Fair 5-Poor

a. I found the booklet easy to read.	1 2 3 4 5
b. The information in the booklet will be useful to me.	1 2 3 4 5
c. I would recommend this booklet to other parents.	1 2 3 4 5
d. I believe that all parents should be given a copy of this booklet.	1 2 3 4 5
e. I believe that if I try and do some of the things in this booklet, I will increase the chances of my child being successful at school.	1 2 3 4 5

Thank-you for your cooperation in completing this questionnaire.

Yours sincerely,